

ELDER WILLIAM BREWSTER

Part I

by Donald B. Ward, D.D., LL.D.



HE Pilgrim movement had its roots in William Brewster's home. It was called Scrooby Manor. It was a mansion of palatial dimensions in that tiny village in Nottinghamshire in England's northeast midlands. William Brewster's father was appointed bailiff of the manor which was a sort of administrator for the estate. The old post road that ran from Scotland down to London passed within sight of Scrooby Manor so Brewster's father was also the postmaster, handling messages that passed back and forth from London to Edinborough and also providing bed and board for weary travellers.

William Brewster was born about 1567. When he was eight or nine his family moved to Scrooby Manor. The manor already had a notable history. Margaret Tudor, daughter of King Henry VII, slept there one June night in 1503. Cardinal Wolsey spent three summer months at the Manor in 1530. Henry VIII held a Privy Council meeting at the Manor in 1541. When the Brewsters arrived the place was considerably run down, which may have been a happy circumstance that I will touch on later.

When he was only 13, William Brewster left the Manor to enroll at Cambridge University where he found a rich, stimulating, intellectually challenging atmosphere. He got a good taste of free thinking philosophy and an excellent Biblical background that would prepare him well for his future dangerous and courageous role as a Separatist leader.

After Brewster left Cambridge he had a fascinating few years on the edge of Queen Elizabeth's court. His mentor was William Davison, one of the queen's diplomats. History doesn't tell us how Ambassador Davison chose Brewster as an apprentice in his office. But Brewster was most fortunate to capture Davison's love and respect and it became almost a father-son relationship.

Brewster must have attended functions that put him in the presence of Queen Bess. But it all ended when William Davison found himself in the Queen's great disfavor. He was an innocent victim of the Queen's chicanery over the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. After much indecision the Queen finally ordered Davison to draw up the document authorizing the execution of her cousin, Mary, who had plotted to overthrow the queen. After the execution Elizabeth turned against Davison claiming it was his fault - that he had goaded her into signing so terrible a document. Elizabeth wanted to accept none of the blame for Mary's execution and shifted it to Davison most unjustly and unfairly.

She ordered him into confinement in the Tower of London, and Brewster, ever his faithful aide, brought him food and all the news he could gather on the comings and goings in the world of high court intrigue. Even though Davison was later released his career was ended. Brewster went back to Scrooby Manor to assume the duties of his ailing father as administrator and postmaster.

Undoubtedly he had learned much in the service of William Davison - much that would later make him a most successful and conciliatory leader of the Pilgrims. All of his life Brewster was sympathetic and compassionate toward those who were in misery, particularly those who had fallen from positions of high rank because of undeserved oppression. He had seen the merciless and conniving side of his monarch which must have given him an even greater resolve to dedicate his life to the pursuit of religious freedom.

But there was certainly much room for love in his life. We're not sure of the exact year but it was probably 1591 or 92 that Brewster married Mary Wentworth.

Mary Wentworth indeed must have been a most remarkable woman. We don't have much biographical material but it can be strongly inferred that she shared her husband's growing interest in religion; she shared his ability to adjust to radical changes. Her health was apparently good. She lived through that dreadful first winter at Plymouth, and she survived the births of at least six children at a time when many women died in childbirth.

She *managed* when William was in prison or hunted by the authorities. She must have been a capable and well-loved mother. All the children except one who died as a baby, lived to become adults. The older children remained in the Netherlands when the Mayflower sailed for America. They came over to join their parents as soon as they could. There are no indications of family disharmony.

In keeping with the times William and Mary Brewster named their children from Biblical inspiration. Their first born, Jonathan, was named for King Saul's courageous son and loyal friend of David. Their first daughter was named Patience, from the theme of patiently waiting for God's will to be known. Then came another daughter named Fear, with fear of God as the theme for her life.



Lossing.

ELDER BREWSTER POINTING OUT THE NARROW WAY.

F. O. Darley.

In 1611, after they moved to Holland, a baby boy was born whom they named Love, probably reflecting the spiritual love they all felt for each other in that struggling fellowship in a strange land. In 1614 their last child was born to whom they gave the most fascinating name - Wrestling, a name indicating the obligation to wrestle with temptation.

Patience, Love, Fear and Wrestling - a quartet of names unique in the annals of nomenclature. I trust that Love would triumph over all as Love was the Brewster offspring through whom I am descended. *So are you!*

It is fascinating that William Brewster began the Mayflower journey as a fugitive. We can only be proud of an ancestor who went to jail for espousing such a noble cause. It is better that he be jailed for that than to stay out of jail because he remained silent.

In Jerome Lawrence's play *The Night Thoreau Spent In Jail*, he had committed an act of civil disobedience in not paying a tax that supported the Mexican War. Ralph Waldo Emerson came to visit him in jail and said, "Henry, what are you doing in jail?" And Thoreau said, "What are you doing out of jail?" . . . a reminder that sometimes social justice is achieved through civil disobedience.

As you remember, the Scrooby Separatists escaped to Holland in 1608 in their quest for religious freedom. During their Holland sojourn William Brewster made his living as a printer of books and pamphlets. One book he published was called *The Perth Assembly* which was highly critical of King James' attempt to remake the Church of Scotland in the image of his English Church. He held an assembly of Bishops at Perth in Scotland to bring it about. When the king learned that William Brewster had printed this subversive and seditious book he flew into a royal rage and ordered an immediate manhunt for its publisher.

At the time Brewster was in London helping another Separatist leader negotiate for a government land grant in Northern Virginia. When word reached him that he was a wanted man he went immediately into hiding. *"Underground?"*

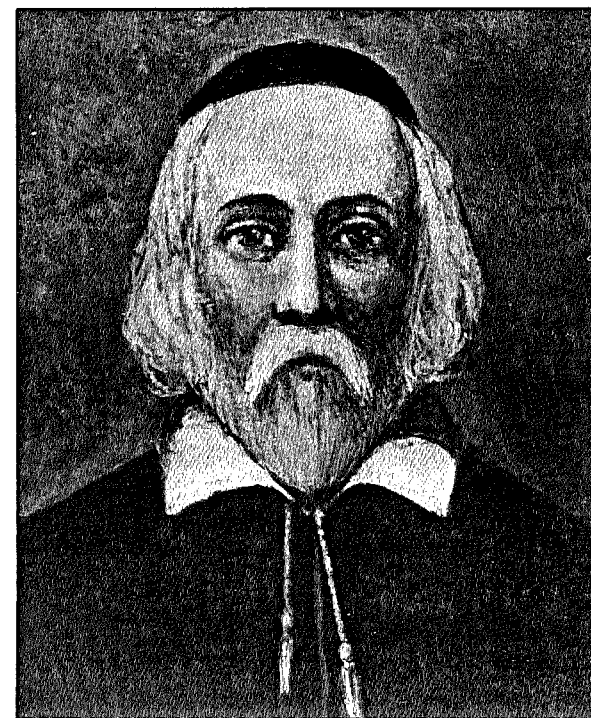
In the book *One Small Candle*, Thomas Fleming describes what the punishment was for publishing such clandestine writing. "For printing a similar book around the same time, a Scottish minister was fined 3000 pounds and sentenced to be whipped and set in the pillory at Westminster to have one of his ears cut off and his nose slit, to be branded in the face with the letters SS (for Stirrer of Sedition), to be whipped and pilloried again on a marked day in Cheapside, to have the other ear cut off and be imprisoned for life. The king did not take religious dissent lightly."

So it is little wonder that William Brewster went into hiding. He had to be smuggled aboard the Mayflower. The Captain, Christopher Jones, would never have embarked on the journey if he had known he had a fugitive on board. He would himself be liable to prosecution for harboring a criminal.

There was a movie made about the Mayflower crossing. There was that awesome, nail-biting scene in which the King's officers searched the ship just before sailing, having heard that fugitive Brewster might be on board. They did not find him, but he almost suffocated in cramped space behind a storage cabinet. But that is just one example of the price paid and the threatening of life that my Pilgrim ancestor and many others endured to uphold their precious religious freedom.

There were plenty of doubts about the wisdom of the journey in the first place. It could simply be too dangerous. Stephen Hopkins had made the trip to Virginia back in 1609 and it had been a disaster, the ship floundering off the coast of Bermuda. The Pilgrims had that sort of discouraging news to deal with.

William Bradford demonstrated his doubts by refusing to take his son with him. Others certainly did take their children. Mary Brewster brought only her two youngest, Love and Wrestling, leaving her two older daughters and her son, Jonathan, who was then 27 years old.



Copyright, 1987 by Elder Brewster Press — RLH Editor:

ELDER WILLIAM BREWSTER

Do you remember where the name Pilgrim came from? It came from Bradford's diaries, when he wrote about their departure from Leyden where they had lived in Holland. "And so they left that good and pleasant city, which had been their resting place near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lifted their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits." And where did Bradford get his inspiration to call them pilgrims? From the Bible, of course. From Chapter 11, verse 13 of the Epistle to the Hebrews which reads:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.



Continued in next issue

Donald B. Ward, D.D., LL.D., received his education at Northwestern, Chicago Theological Seminary and Oxford University (Mansfield College). An eleventh generation Congregationalist, he has served many Congregational parishes including Evanston, Los Angeles, Denver, and Glen Ellyn, IL. Dr. Ward was also president of Yankton College for eight years; his grandfather founded the college in 1881. He is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the Congregational Christian Churches. Dr. Ward is a descendant of Brewster, Bradford, Alden, Warren, Hopkins and Rogers. Donald and his wife, Verna, have three children and five grandchildren; their address is Park Alhambra 56, Alhambra, CA

THE PILGRIMS IN HOLLAND

(Part II of III)

By Dr. Catharine Newbold



N many respects the Pilgrims were congenial with Holland and her convictions and ideals. Holland was born and grew to her greatness in a fierce struggle for religious and civil freedom against the mighty Spanish Power. We know little of the Pilgrims' brief year in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, they soon discovered an intolerance quite as rigid as the one from which they had fled. The disputes, contests and quarrels among the Brownists and other independent groups who had settled in Holland during the latter part of Queen Elizabeth's reign and the early years of James' were more intense than any the Dutch had experienced since the Reformation. Some of the quarrels were trivial, some were of a more serious nature such as those concerning church government, baptism, and translations of the scriptures, but they made irreconcilable differences between pastors, and the flocks divided. Thus although the Pilgrims found friends and some of them found modest opportunities for work in numerous trades, life in Amsterdam was far from peaceful. Two facts are pretty certain about their life there, they set up their own church (the third refugee church there) and they were desperately poor. Bradford has this to say, "It was not long before they saw the grim and grisly face of poverty coming upon them like an armed man, with whom they must buckle and encounter, and from whom they could not fly, but they were armed with faith and patience against him and all his encounters, and though they were sometimes foiled, yet by God's assistance they prevailed and got victory."

Victory, if you can call it that, came with a decision to migrate again - this time to Leiden. A committee was named to petition the Burgomasters, Court, and City of Leiden to allow them to settle there. Their request, a simple, moving appeal, is preserved in the *Journal of the Court of Justice*. "With due submission and respect: Ian Robarthse, Minister of the Divine Word, and some of the members of the Christian Reformed religion, born in the Kingdom of Great Britain, to the number of 100 persons or thereabouts, men and women, represent that they desire to come to live in this city by the first day of May next (1609) and to have the freedom thereof in carrying on their trades, without being a burden to anyone."

The Dutch republic was faced with the necessity of remaining on good terms with England for its wool was imported from there and the English navy was needed in the event of the revival of war with Spain, but a reply to the petition was prompt. The Burgomasters held that all considerations of political advantage should be disregarded where freedom of religion was at stake. "No honest person would be refused free ingress provided such persons behave themselves and submit to the laws and ordinances," so the answer read. Toward the end of April 1609, the Pilgrims sailed from Amsterdam to Leiden which was to be their home for the next ten years.

As in the case of their year in Amsterdam, little information is available about the Pilgrims in Leiden. Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation* devotes only about forty pages to their ten years there and all but four deal with the reasons for leaving. The records in the Leiden Archives give us some information on their births, marriages, occupations, and deaths.

Leiden in 1610 was a busy manufacturing city of 50,000, less commercially famous than Amsterdam, but well known for its University founded in 1575. The story of the establishment of the University indicates much of the spirit of the Dutch. William of Orange had long dreamed of having a Calvinist University in Holland and many cities had applied for the honor of being the home of such a University. After an heroic stand against the Spanish in 1574 in which they broke the siege, the citizens of Leiden were offered a choice of reward - one year's freedom from taxes or the University. Grinding as were the taxes and poor as the citizens were, they unhesitatingly chose the University.

Leiden proved to be a much more satisfactory and congenial place than Amsterdam to live. Two great Reformed Churches, St. Pancraskerk and Pieterskerk were of central ecclesiastical importance. By the time the Pilgrims settled in Leiden, the University occupied buildings of the former convent of the White Nuns close by. It was to this favorable neighborhood that the Pilgrims gravitated. Ultimately about three-fourths of them found homes no more than a quarter mile from the Klokteeg, the alley running from the Pieterskerk to the University. Klokteeg means Bell Alley, so named because at one time the bell of Pieterskerk was mounted in a separate tower. Because they were not permitted to worship in any regular church, the Pilgrims were forced to find a place to gather. On January 27, 1611, John Robinson and others purchased a property across from Pieterskerk. The large house called Groeneport (Green Door) became the residence of Robinson and the place of worship. Under the guidance of a carpenter in the group, William Jepson, a series of twenty-one small cottages were erected within the courtyards of the Groeneport.

